(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that construction of the roads in Maharashtra has either been stopped or is going on at a very slow pace due to hindrance created by many departments like Environment and Forest Department etc. and thereby causing great difficulties to the citizens;

(b) if so, whether Government would constitute a coordination committee consisting of all departments so that this problem could be solved on a single table; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor alongwith the steps being taken by Government for the speedy implementation of these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) By and large there is no hindrance in the construction of National Highways works by the Departments like Environment and Forests Department etc. except in one work namely widening to two lane of National Highway No. 16 in a length of about 57 km., which has been stopped for want of Forest Clearance from the Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra.

(b) A Committee of Secretaries has been constituted under the Cabinet Secretary to address Inter-Ministerial and Centre-State issues such as land acquisition, utility shifting, environment approvals and clearance of Road Over Bridge (ROBs). In addition to this, State Governments have appointed senior officers as nodal officers for resolving problems associated with implementation of the National Highways Development Project (NHDP) such as land acquisition, removal of utilities, forest/pollution/environment clearances etc. These nodal officers hold periodic meetings to review the project and take action to resolve the problems.

(c) Does not arise.

Protection to Indian sailors under Merchant Shipping Act, 1958

3912. DR. ABISHEK MANU SINGHVI:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 enables Government to impound a ship registered in a foreign country, when there is a death due to negligence or murder of Indian sailors on such ships;

(b) if so, the manner in which Government assures that our sailors get due justice whenever any serious physical injury or death comes to their notice *suo moto* or is specifically brought to their notice; and

(c) whether the provisions of this Act of 1958 are adequate to protect interests of Indian sailors or whether any amendment is required?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Any accident including the death or injury to any seafarer of any nationality on board a ship registered in foreign country while the said vessel is on or near the coast of India can be invested by an officer appointed under section 359 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958. During the course of investigation, the vessel or its crew can be detained for the purpose of conducting the investigation. However, if the death is due to any criminal act such as murder, the relevant provisions of the Indian Panal Code/Criminal Penal code would apply and the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 does not have any provisions to address such issues.

(b) In cases where an Indian seafarer gets injured and dies on a foreign registered ship while the vessel is at hgih seas, it is the jurisdiction of the respective flag administration to conduct investigation into the cause of such accident or criminal incident. The Government of India, being a substantially interested state, however, has now also started participating as observer in such investigation wherever possible. Further, whenever feasible, the Indian Embassy/High Commission officials are intimated to investigate the matter in the first port of call in the foreign countries.

(c) The Indian Merchant Shipping Act address the subject of protecting interests of Indian sailors in various sections. However, to further strengthen the existing provisions following additional measures have been initiated by the Directorate General of Shipping.

(i) Recruitment and Placement Rules, 2005 have been notified to regulate various manning agents who employ Indian Seasfarers. This notification requires mandatory registration of such manning agents operating out of offices registered in India. This has ensured that manning agents, who employ Indian seasfarers on

Indian as well as foreign registered vessels, are held accountable to the welfare of such Indian seafarers.

(ii) A psychometric test has been introduced at the entry level of officers in maritime training courses, which will help in determining his/her attitude and aptitude for the sea. It assists in taking corrective measures to mentally prepare for rigours of a life at sea.

(iii) The Directorate General of Shipping has also made wide publicity in leading newspapers with regard to the recruitment through the registered Recruitment and Placement Shipping Agents for employment in marine sector.

(iv) A new course module has been formulated to sensitize the trainees with regard to rights of seafarers as laid down under the Merchant Shipping (Recruitment and Placement) Rules, 2005 in all Pre-sea Training Institutes.

(v) The matter has also been taken up with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) with regard to consolidating the international conventions with regard to shipping casualty and making the law stringent to bring around the non-responsible flat state to carry out their responsibility.

(vi) MS Notice No. 5-A has been issued by the D.G.S. This notice requires mandatory reporting and plan of action to deal with casualities involving Indian seafarers on foreign flat ships.

Targets for construction under NHDP II and III

3913. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that under second and third phase of National Highways Development Programme construction work for projects had already started in the year 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether construction work targeted for these projects was fixed for the above two years;